

**Dorchester Avenue Project/South Boston Dorchester Avenue Improvement Study
Joint Task Force Meeting
Meeting Summary**

Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Location: Dorchester House, 1353 Dorchester Avenue

Attendees:

Keri Pyke, Louis Berger Group

Gretchen von Grossmann

Brad Washburn, BRA

Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA

Ines Soto, BRA

Jill Ochs-Zick, BRA

Karen Hong, BRA

Ralph DeNisco, BTB

Vineet Gupta, BTB

Jalal Ghaemghami, BPHC

Amanda Simon, ONS

Karen Crowley, Senator Hart's Office

Sean Denniston

Eileen Fenton

Rosanne Foley

Arlene Lopes

Anne Riley

Richard O'Mara

Jane Howard

Ed Crowley

Kimberlee Smith

My Lam

Linda Zablocki

Denise Lynch

Beth Bernier

Steve Bieringer

The joint meeting between the Dorchester Ave Task Force and the South Boston Dorchester Avenue Improvement Study's Task Force was called to order at approximately 6:30 p.m. at Dorchester House, by Inés Soto, Planner with the BRA.

Inés Soto began the meeting by greeting the Task Force and thanking them for attending. After a round of introductions, Gretchen von Grossmann made a presentation on the Action Plan Update. During the presentation, some questions were raised for discussion, which had been brought up by Don Kindsvatter at the previous meeting.

The first question was, "If you were to describe Dorchester Ave to a person from out of town, what would you say?" Some of the responses were that it was the spine or straightest main thoroughfare through Dorchester, it was the shortcut to the expressway to South Shore, it connected downtown to Milton, and it was a trolley route. Other responses described it to be a lengthy road always under construction, a 'cut-across' road because people would not want to drive along it, that it was defined by the numerous auto-body shops, nail salons, and pizza shops along the Avenue, and that it was rather uncoordinated. Others mentioned that it was an area with many ethnicities and that it had the potential to become more inviting.

Following this, Task Force members indicated that they wished to preserve the busy activity along Dorchester Avenue, the good mix of uses – including retail, residential, etc. They also indicated that the Avenue had a 'nice scale' to it, and were happy that most businesses attracted locals, while also targeting a regional clientele.

The next question was, “If you could snap your fingers and change one thing about the way Dorchester Avenue looks, what would it be?” Task Force members mentioned having more trees, better traffic lights, and consistent street lights. They also indicated that they would like the Avenue to be more walkable, which included getting the sidewalks fixed, replacing bricks, and eliminating slants. All these improvements would also contribute to a safer environment. In terms of perspective, it was mentioned that more of the history and community could be reflected. A Task Force member also brought up the point that everyone involved with Dot Ave has to take ownership and especially maintain the properties they own.

Gretchen then presented photographs of Dorchester Avenue, pointing out elements of the streetscape that were in disrepair or could be improved upon, especially the sidewalks and street lighting elements. She also presented some diagrams that showed mappings of the Avenue, indicating the kinds of street lights and their locations, the Avenue’s visual relationship to the downtown skyline, and where the activity centers were along the Avenue.

Next, Gretchen and Keri addressed the primary and secondary elements of the recommended palette. This meant selecting the right style and location of primary elements, namely streetlights, sidewalk pavement, and trees. For streetlights, it would mean new installations of the pendant style streetlight, in a continuous fashion. For smaller spaces, the acorn would be used. The important point was to maintain the appropriate “family” of elements along the Avenue. For sidewalks, high quality concrete would be used, with accent strips where possible at activity centers. Street trees would be added where possible and appropriate, especially in islands and open spaces in commercial districts. They would be columnar and trimmed, always maintaining a 4’ clear sidewalk width. Following this, the secondary elements would be selected to complement the primary elements. Also, dimensional standards would also need to be set.

The Task Force members were all in agreement with the proposed palette. They also agreed with looking at possible custom patterns for Duratherm crosswalks.

There was also a discussion regarding what makes Dorchester Avenue feel safe, and the Task Force members agreed that it was a combination of beautifying the area, improving businesses and visitors’ perceptions, among other things. There was also a suggestion for restaurants on Dorchester Avenue to collaborate with hotels in the area, in order to attract more visitors to Dorchester Avenue.

Inés announced at the end that the draft Business Trend Analysis was now available and that a copy would be sent to each Task Force member.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8.00pm.